

Claim 20. Apparatus according to Claim 14, wherein said vessel is provided with a heat exchange jacket.

Claim 21. Apparatus according to Claim 20, wherein said heat exchange jacket comprises an electrical heater.

Claim 22. Apparatus according to Claim 20, wherein said heat exchange jacket is adapted to accomodate the flow of a heat transfer medium therethrough.--

Amended A₂

REMARKS

This Preliminary Amendment is being filed to conform the claims to proper form for prosecution before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

For the record, Applicants emphasize that although the claims were amended, and, therefore, might be argued to have been amended for a reason substantially related to patentability, a fair reading of the amended claims will reveal that the departures from the previous claims were for clarification purposes only, and that Applicants did not narrow the claims in any material respect. Therefore, Applicants submit that the amended claims are entitled to the full range of equivalents.

Favorable action is respectfully solicited.

CONDITIONAL PETITION FOR EXTENSION OF TIME

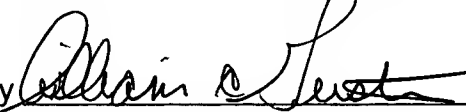
If any extension of time for this amendment is required, applicant requests that this be considered a petition therefore. Please charge the required petition fee to Deposit Account No. 14-1263.

ADDITIONAL FEE

Please charge any insufficiency of fee or credit any excess to Deposit Account No. 14-1263.

Respectfully submitted,

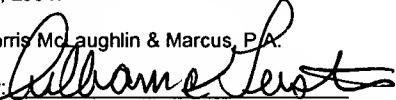
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By 

Date: 11/27/01

**MARKED-UP COPY OF AMENDED PARAGRAPHS,
SHOWING CHANGES RELATIVE TO PREVIOUS VERSION**

Claim 1 (amended). Apparatus for carrying out mass transfer processes with high-viscosity liquids, [particularly for boiling down and/or devolatilizing polymer melts,] comprising at least one vertically disposed vessel [(1)] having a [feeder means (4)] feed distributor for the liquid to be treated, an outlet [(7)] for volatile components and an outlet [(6)] for the treated liquid, the [feeder means (4) being equipped with a distributor element (3)] the feed distributor having a multiplicity of orifices [(8, 10)] for subdividing the high-viscosity liquid to be treated into a multiplicity of individual streams, [characterized in that] wherein essentially vertically arranged wire loops [(2)] are disposed in the vicinity of the orifices [(8, 10)], along which wire loops the high-viscosity liquid runs off under the action of gravity.

Claim 2 (amended). Apparatus according to Claim 1, [characterized in that] wherein the feed distributor [element] is a perforated plate.

Claim 3 (amended). Apparatus according to Claim 1 [or 2, characterized in that] , wherein the feed distributor element [(3) includes] comprises at least one horizontally arranged tube [(3)] which has orifices [(8)] pointing downwards [and/or], upwards or both.

Claim 4 (amended). Apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein [any one of Claims 1 to 3, characterized in that] the wire loops [(2)] in the vicinity of the orifices [(8, 10)] in the feed distributor [element (3, 9)] are disposed detachably.

Claim 5 (amended). Apparatus according to [Claims 3 to 4, characterized in that] Claim 3, wherein [the distributor element comprises at least one horizontally arranged tube (3) which has] said orifices are slotted orifices [(8)] pointing upwards.

Claim 6 (amended). Apparatus according to Claim 5, [characterized in that the distributor element comprises at least one horizontally arranged tube (3) which has slotted orifices (8) pointing upwards, into which] wherein the wire loops [(2)] are clipped into said orifices.

Claim 7 (amended). Apparatus according to [any one of Claims 1 to 6, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein two, three or more of the wire loops [(2)] at a time are combined into a basket-like lattice [(14)] or wire mesh.

Claim 8 (amended). Apparatus according to Claim 7, [characterized in that] wherein two or more adjacent lattices [(14)] or wire meshes are linked to one another.

Claim 9 (amended). Apparatus according to [any one of Claims 1 to 8, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein the wire loops [(2)] are [additionally] attached to the vessel bottom.

Claim 10 (amended). Apparatus according to [any one of Claims 1 to 9, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein the wire loops [can be heated, particularly by means of electric resistance heaters means] comprising heating for the wire loops.

Claim 11 (amended). Apparatus according to [any one of Claims 1 to 10, characterized in that the distributor elements (3, 9) are formed by] Claim 1, wherein the feed distributor is formed of heat exchange tubes [(12)] which are vertically arranged in the vessel [(1)], debauch into the vessel [(1)] and have orifices [(8)], the wire loops [(2)] being attached to the bottom ends of said heat exchange tubes.

Claim 12 (amended). Apparatus according to [any one of Claims 1 to 11, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein the area enclosed by [a] each individual wire loop is from 0.5 cm² to 2500 cm².

Claim 13 (amended). Apparatus according to [any one of Claims 1 to 12, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein the wire loops [(2)] taper in the direction of flow of the liquid [and, in particular, terminate in an acute angle at their bottom ends].

Claim 14 (amended). Apparatus according to [any one of Claims 1 to 13, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein the vessel [(1)] is designed to be heatable, [and/or] coolable or both [, and in particular is provided with a jacket for an electric heater or for a heat transfer medium to be passed through].

Claim 15 (amended). Apparatus according to [any one of Claims 1 to 14, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein the top ends of individual [the] wire loops [(2)] are disposed at different orifices [(8, 10), particularly at distant orifices not disposed directly next to one another].

Claim 16 (amended). Apparatus according to [any one of Claims 1 to 15, characterized in that] Claim 1, wherein one or more wire lattices [(15)] essentially arranged horizontally above one another are additionally provided below the orifices [(8, 10)].

Claim 17 (amended). [Use of the apparatus according to any one of Claims 1 to 16] A method for boiling down and devolatilizing high-viscosity liquids [, particularly for boiling down and/or devolatilizing polymer solutions or polymer melts, equally preferably polycarbonate solutions or polycarbonate melts and the use] and for carrying out chemical reactions between [the] liquid layer [in the wire loop] and [the] a surrounding gas space which contains a reactive gas component, and for condensation reactions which comprises carrying out said boiling down and devolatilizing, or said reactions in an apparatus according to Claim 1.